



GROVE STREET NEWS

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June 1982

BLOCK FAIR JUNE 5

The eleventh annual Grove Street Block Fair and Closet Sale will soon be taking over the street. Saturday, June 5 is the date so start preparing now. There are lots of things for block residents to do:

- You can volunteer to help run the fair--we need people to staff the Block Association tables on the day of

the fair, put up posters, call newspapers, collect rummage items, sweep up afterwards and the like. Call Stan Frank (691-5597) or Guy Baehr (242-6141) if you'd like to volunteer. It can be a lot of fun.

- You can rent some space at half price and make some extra money selling things. As a block resident, you can

have six feet of space for only \$23, half the regular \$46 rate for non-block residents.

The fair will run from Hudson Street to Seventh Avenue, noon to 7 p.m. Rain date is June 6. But hurry, space is limited. Call Guy Baehr (242-6141).

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Grass Greener Other Side of Grove St.



By Mann Genchell, 39 Grove

Grove Street, east of Seventh Avenue South, is a compact, small-scale cityscape. It has a fortunate open site, facing Christopher Park--a true grove--giving it a light and airy aspect.

This short block has probably the most diversified array of architectural designs and periods of any Village block. Each structure is among the finest of its type, and all respect the original appearance, proportions and unique quality of the street. The one exception is the El Avram canopy.

The buildings on Grove

Photos by Connie Grover

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Trees, T-shirts & Pachysandra

By Guy Baehr, 41 Grove

More than a dozen Grove Streeters turned out for the annual Spring Planting this year--and planted an estimated 692 pachysandra plants (\$260 worth) around many of the 28 trees on the street.

Organized by Stan Frank, the May 2 event turned



into a bit of a celebration because it also marked the planting of two replacement trees on the block and the delivery of new GSBA T-shirts. By coincidence, both arrived the Friday before.

The trees, a Japanese Pagoda in front of 50 Grove and a cherry tree (in bloom) in front of 14 Grove, were purchased by the Association with \$610 earned during last year's annual Block Fair. The City of New York co-operated (after many phone calls from Stan) by cutting down and removing the stumps of the old trees, which had died.

The T-shirts, five

dozen in sizes ranging from small to extra-large, are Kelly green with a white tree design and lettering. They cost the Association \$3.85 each and we're selling them for \$5 apiece. (Spring Planting participants got them for half price and Block Fair volunteers can expect a similar deal.) Ria Boemi did a good job of investigating various fabrics, colors, prices and suppliers; selecting an attractive design and placing the order.

Planting Reorganized

This year's edition of the Spring Planting was organized a little differently from those in past years. Following proposals and discussion at the last General Meeting, it was agreed that the planting would concentrate on a limited number of tree wickets where volunteers indicated they would try to give year-round attention to such chores as summer watering, weeding and regular removal of beer bottles, newspapers, candy wrappers and the like.

In the past the Association would try to spread a limited number of plants and flowers among all the wickets and hope for the best. In most cases there would be little trace of our efforts by August, except in the wickets where someone took a continuing interest. Even in those, the lack of enough plants to crowd out the weeds and overshadow the

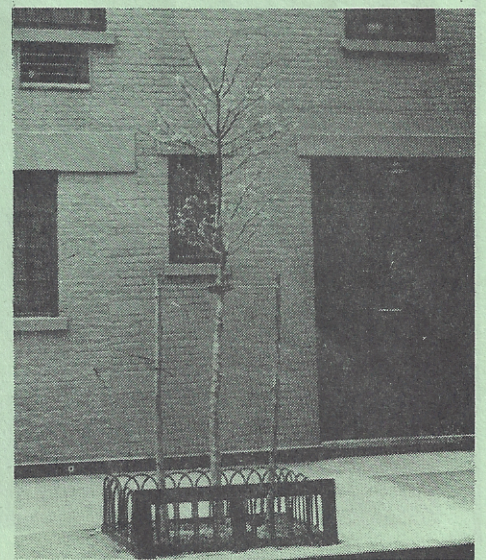
litter had a dispiriting effect.

Was Your House Missed?

We are hoping the new plan will work better. If the wicket in front of your house was missed and you'd like to do something about it, contact Guy Baehr (242-6141) or Stan Frank (691-5597) and we'll see what we can work out in the way of more pachysandra.

In addition, residents who'd like to "adopt a wicket" can have the Association pay for up to \$10 worth of flowers to plant between the pachysandra plants. Hurry, though--due to a tight budget, only the first five such requests can be honored.

Finally, if you see the plants in front of your building wilting or turning brown this summer, take it upon yourself to fill up a bucket or wastebasket with water and give them a drink.■



ADOPT A WICKET!

Paine-less Visions

By Rhoda Carroll Fairman,
49 Grove

"In 1808, Paine was ill again, and in July 1808, he was living with a family called Ryder in Greenwich Village in Herring Street (now Bleecker Street). Paine became lonely at Ryder's and at his request Madame de Bonneville agreed to have him with her at 59 Grove Street, not many yards away. . . . He was seen in fine weather . . . sitting at the south window of the first story room . . . the sash was raised, a small table or stand was placed before him, with an open book placed upon it, which he appeared to be reading. He had his spectacles on . . . and a decanter, containing liquor the colour of rum or brandy, was standing next to his book."

One day, in the recent fine weather, I was sitting at my south window with my sash raised, a small table or stand placed before me, and reading the above pastoral description which must have put me to sleep for an hour or so. History has never been my best subject. Suddenly, I awoke to a swell of music . . . the simultaneous interplay of Broadway show tunes, jazz riffs, piano bar harmonizing and the mighty strains of Dixieland that distinguishes Grove Street from our neighbors. I mean the noise must have jolted me bolt upright. In a flash I had an awareness, or a weird experience, depending on what school of therapy you go to.

I saw Thomas Paine across my courtyard wearing a green Grove Street T-shirt. He turned to say something to his girlfriend, Madame de Bonneville, who had just come back to the apartment with an Amalfi pizza... and



59 Grove St.: If Paine could see it now!

as he turned I saw written on the back of his T-shirt, "These are the times that try men's souls. But it could get worse. Your building could go co-op." Wearing spectacles but no pants he raises his sash again and shouts, "Waiter, a campari on the rocks, and tell them to play Sweet Georgia Brown."

That's something they don't say often enough in the history course I'm taking, "Plus ca change, plus c'est la meme chose." ■

Tenants' Group Is Growing At 35 Grove

By Matthew Sperling
(President, 35 Grove St.
Tenants' Association)

The 35 Grove Street Tenants' Association had its first meeting on December 14, 1981. We have now had five meetings that have been attended by people from 20 apartments, or one-third of all units in the building.

The association was formed during the winter, because the landlord, ELK Investors, was continuing its past practice of not supplying adequate heat.

Many people have said that there was more heat this winter. In fact, many said it was too hot and they had to leave their windows open. Still, some people did not get enough.

The Tenants' Association took action to remedy this problem of too much, too little by appointing a committee to investigate the building's heat and hot water system and make sure it is up to code. This investigation is ongoing.

Interest Paid on Security

An early victory for the association was unexpected. For the first time in memory, tenants received the interest on their security deposits. I, for one, received checks for more than \$90.

Seeking further lawful reimbursements, the association has recently appointed a coordinator to work with the floor captains in an effort to get the landlord

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Grove Street East

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Street East are mostly 19th century. The corner house, 98, was built in 1825, with 96 being added in 1870. The painter, Saul Schary, lived at 96 in the 1940s. No. 92 is a handsome six-story apartment house built in 1916. It is notable for its splendid arched loggia of Doric columns and iron balcony along the front of the building. "The Grove," 84, is mellowed brownstone, dates from 1882 and was designed by Babcock & McAvoy in a free adaptation of the Queen Anne style. At the corner of Sheridan Square, 80 is a high apartment house constructed in the late 1920s, which despite its size fits in well with its neighbors, since it is restrained in style and built of harmonizing brick.

Federal Houses at 88-90 Grove

The most eminent architectural achievement of Grove Street East is in mid-block, 88 and 90. These Federal houses were built in 1827 for two brothers, Jesse and Henry Halsey, descendants of a family that arrived in Long Island in 1640 and whose original homestead is now a museum in Southampton. The houses have been remodelled by various owners with great charm and sensitivity to the original scale and fine quality of the street.

No. 88, in the mid-to-late 19th century, was a most respectable boarding house for young ladies. One of these young ladies, Ida Rowe, married Max Eastman, the left-wing activist. In the early 1900s, Robert Hunter, a protege of Jane Addams and a noted writer on social problems, lived in 88 with his wife and two children. Hunter sold the house to

Frederico Vitale, a landscape artist. Vitale, in turn, sold the house to J. G. Phelps Stokes, in 1915.

At 90, structural changes, including the splendid two-story studio on the top floor, were made in 1893 by Robert Blum (1857-1903), the artist, who lived in the house at that time. He also built a studio in the back of the house which he rented to artist friends. Robert Blum's works are in the Metropolitan and Brooklyn Museums. The next occupant of 90 was Jules Guerin (1866-1946), a noted muralist and illustrator, who contributed decorations for the Lincoln Memorial in Washington and the old Pennsylvania Station in New York. In 1909, the artist Helen Stokes bought No. 90.

In 1931, J. G. Phelps Stokes purchased the house from his sister Helen. In 1932, construction was completed which merged 90 and 88 into one house. The unification of the houses, accomplished with meticulous care and finesse, makes a distinguished home whose urbane elegance is a distinctive landlord of Grove Street East. ■

Block Fair

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- You can contribute rummage items to the Block Association for sale during the fair. Books, records, household items, almost anything except clothes, will be welcome. Call Heyward Ehrlich (255-5274).
- You can bake a cake (or cookies, brownies or lasagna) to contribute to the Block Association for sale at our food table. Call Freeman McMillan (924-8475).

Last year's block fair netted just over \$2,000 for the Block Association and enabled us to have an active

year. We held a popular "Block Brunch," bought new T-shirts, replaced two dead trees, revived the "Grove Street News," planted pachysandra in many of the wickets and contributed to the rebuilding of St. Luke's.

The block fair is the only way the Association raises money, so however you can participate is important.

But, you'll also find it's very enjoyable, whether you're a vendor, a volunteer or a part of the crowd. Invite your friends! See you there! ■

35 Grove

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to send tenants their rent histories. These histories must include the names of former tenants and a record of rents paid for each apartment, going back to the apartment's base date, in our case 1974.

Rent Rollback Obtained

One tenant has already blazed the rent rollback/reimbursement trail by bringing his case to the Conciliation and Appeals Board. The CAB found in his favor, and the tenant has had his rent substantially lowered and has received more than \$1,000 in rent that he was overcharged.

Another first at 35 Grove is the tenants' bulletin board in the first floor hallway. The landlord grudgingly gave his approval in writing. A graphic artist in the building is generously donating her time to make a sign to put above the board.

What started out as a complaint about lack of heat has become an organization capable of bringing about needed changes in our building. ■